

Illegal and improper uses of fireworks continue to harm public

from the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

For most Americans, the Fourth of July celebration is a time for food, fun and fireworks, but in 2007 nearly 10,000 Americans were treated in emergency rooms for firework-related injuries.

About 64 percent of these injuries occurred during the one month period surrounding the July 4th holiday.

A review of these injuries shows that burns were the most common, accounting for more than half of the incidents. The parts of the body most often injured were hands (estimated 2,000 injuries), eyes (1,400 injuries) and legs (1,200 injuries). Over the last 10 years, there has been an upward trend in injuries. Eleven deaths were reported in 2007, the same number as the previous year.

CPSC is working to keep American families safe by educating the public about the risk of injury associated with fireworks, enforcing fireworks regulations and by prosecuting dealers and distributors who manufacture and sell illegal explosives. As a part of its fireworks enforcement program, CPSC actively works with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) to investigate roadside stands, warehouses and retail stores that sell professional grade explosives to consumers, and homes that serve as havens for the manufacture of dangerous fireworks devices.

At the sea ports, CPSC is working alongside Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to ensure shipments are in compliance with the federal regulations. With CBP assistance, CPSC staff selectively sampled and tested over 400 shipments of fireworks last year. Of these 46 percent were found to contain illegal fireworks.

While the federal government remains committed to stopping the manufacture and sale of illegal fireworks, CPSC encourages consumers who use fireworks to safely use legal consumer fireworks.

To reduce injuries, CPSC recommends following these fireworks safety tips:

- Never allow young children to play with or ignite fireworks.
- Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.
- Avoid buying fireworks that come in brown paper packaging, as this can often be a sign that the fireworks were made for professional displays and could pose a danger to consumers.

- Adults should always supervise fireworks activities. Parents often don't realize that there are many injuries from sparklers to children under five. Sparklers burn at temperatures of about 2,000 degrees; hot enough to melt some metals.
- Never have any portion of your body directly over a fireworks device when lighting the fuse. Move back a safe distance immediately after lighting.
- Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Never point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- Light one item at a time, then move back quickly.
- Never carry fireworks in a pocket or shoot them off in metal or glass containers.
- After fireworks fully complete their functioning, douse the spent device with plenty of water from a bucket or hose before discarding to prevent a trash fire.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270, or visit CPSC's web site at www.cpsc.gov/talk.html.